



**THE MOSELEY SOCIETY**

Formed to protect a unique area of Birmingham

Charity No. 512211



## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

August 2013

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### Golf Comes to Moseley

By John Moreton

In the 1890s golf was being prescribed as an "healthful exercise" by the medical profession and in September, 1892, a group of local businessmen, including W.H. Tolkien, uncle of the author of "The Hobbit" and "Lord of the Rings", convened to form a club. They chose a site, which still forms part of the modern course, in Billesley Lane, on farmland leased by a Mr Lane, the tenant of Billesley Hall Farm and fields belonging to a Mr Parker. Farming here dates back to the 13th century, when there was an assart on the site of the present clubhouse. It was part of the Swanshurst quarter of the Parish of Yardley, which until 1911 was in the county of Worcestershire and belonged to the Holte family who sold it to the Grevis family c1578. They were yeoman farmers and increased their holdings in the area. Their land was purchased by John Taylor, a manufacturer and one of the founders of Lloyds Bank Limited and it was from this family that the club, much later, bought the land running down to Yardley Wood Road and which included Coldbath Cottage. This used to stand close to the junction of modern Yardley Wood Road and Coldbath Road. It was demolished a few years ago to enable developers to erect two apartment blocks of indifferent appearance.



Entrance to the golf course on Billesley Lane

This is where the story becomes more fascinating: Coldbath Cottage was built around a Stuart hunting lodge with a Jacobean fireplace and oak panelling. Kings James I of the United Kingdom and VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne in 1603 and moved to London with his courtiers where they played golf at Blackheath. James was the son of Mary Queen of Scots. She was reviled for playing golf shortly after the death of her husband and later executed, not for playing golf, but for wishing to re-establish Catholicism as the country's religion. James, however, was raised as a Protestant and held strong religious views which he expounded in his writings. One of his early tutors was Archbishop Adamson of St Andrews, who was caught playing golf on the Sabbath in 1582. James was also a keen huntsman. It is known that he purchased golf clubs and balls from a William Mayne in Scotland. These may have been for his own use and for his son. It is firmly believed that the king played on the South Inch in Perth. The course is now defunct but there is a more modern course on the North Inch.

The Catholic community were generally tolerated and many held important positions but a group of disaffected men of Jesuit leanings plotted against James. They met in houses in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, including a retreat in Ladbrook Park, which now includes a fine golf course within its boundaries.

The King's pursuivants were on their trail and they had to flee Ladbrook. The General of the Jesuits, Father Garnet, was against violence but yielded to persuasion and the Gunpowder Plot came into being. So, James' men were in the area and no doubt members of the court to keep an eye on proceedings. They almost certainly used their time hunting and quite possibly playing golf on the heathland around the lodge. Why else is Kings Heath so named?

To return to Moseley Golf Club. The original course consisted of nine holes, with such hazards as streams, ditches, hedgerows and fences. The grass was invariably long, as it was used for grazing and, in the summer, mowing grass. Hence the need for the much sneered-at plus fours as the gentlemen wished to keep their trouser cuffs dry. There were disagreements with the farmers, usually resolved by agreeing to higher rent in return for lower mowing.

The entrance to the course was the iron gate at the corner of Billesley Lane and Southlands Road. Across the lane was a row of cottages; in 1896 it was agreed to take a piece of land at the rear of Mrs Peyton's cottage to erect a pavilion and a Boulton and Paul building was purchased, members donating furniture and other useful items. Mrs Peyton was engaged for the sum of £2 per quarter to look after the pavilion.

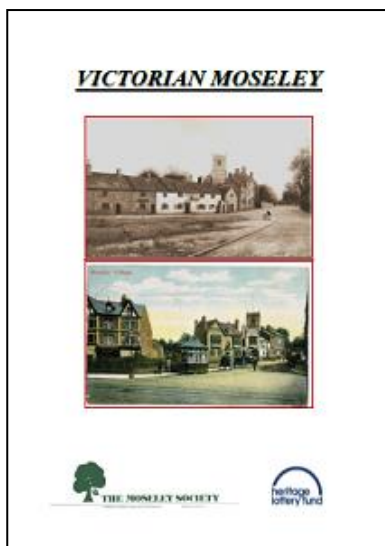
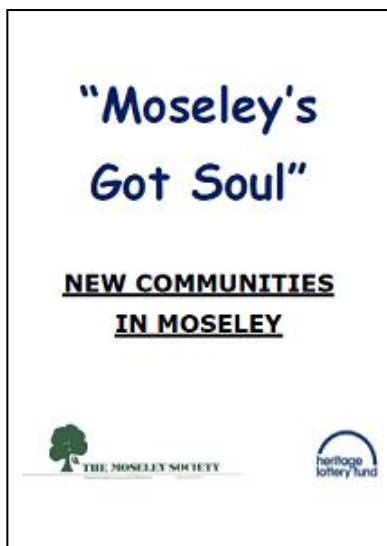
In 1900 farmer Lane gave up his tenancy of the farmhouse and the club successfully negotiated with the Taylor family for a lease of just over 60 acres, including the farmhouse, Billesley Hall Farm, and the outbuildings. Much repair work was needed on the house, while the land was still used for grazing. Then in 1907 the tenant of Coldbath Farm offered the club the use of 20 acres of his land. In 1898 he advertised in the Kidderminster Advertiser for "A cowhand, must be a good milker. Apply Coldbath Farm, Moseley".

It became possible to extend the course to 18 holes. A further 27 acres were purchased and W.P. Lewis, professional at Kings Norton Golf Club, founded very soon after Moseley, inspected the land. The new, full course opened for play in November, 1908.

By this time The Worcestershire Union of Golf Clubs had been formed in 1905, Moseley among the founder clubs. In 1911 boundary changes meant that the course was now in Warwickshire, along with three other local clubs. When the Warwickshire Union made moves to take these clubs they were strongly resisted. A ruling by the M.C.C. that cricket clubs could remain affiliated to their original counties was successfully invoked and Moseley still proudly flies the Three Black Pears on the flag for county events. When the members of the Worcestershire Ladies County Golf Association celebrated its centenary in 2003 they presented each of the founding clubs with a tree bearing the famous Worcestershire black pears which flourishes close by the modern clubhouse.

## **News and Announcements**

### **Booklets**



The 'Moseley At War' booklets are complete and were hugely popular at the Moseley Festival. There is a second batch on the way from the printers, along with the brand new Victorian Moseley and New Communities in Moseley booklets!

We'll have the new booklets in time for our celebration so why not come along and be amongst the first people to get their hands on a copy (details below).

## Celebrate Our Success!

The Heritage Lottery Fund Project is drawing to a close! To celebrate the booklets, our fab website and all the hard work of volunteers in digitising the collection, we are having a party on September 23<sup>rd</sup>! Of course you are all invited to celebrate with us.

We will be meeting in the Orange Room at The Moseley Exchange at 12.30pm, for a buffet lunch at 1pm, with wine to toast the success of the project.

We'll also be thanking all those involved with the project so please come along and show your appreciation for Christine, Janet and all of our hard-working volunteers, without whom this project wouldn't have been possible.

Please RSVP if you would like to attend, so that we know how many to cater for!

**Moseley Society Local History Group**

*Celebration  
Of The Heritage  
Lottery Fund Project*

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013  
12.30pm  
Orange Room  
The Moseley Exchange  
149-153 Alcester Road, Moseley,  
Birmingham. B13 8JP

**Buffet Lunch**

Everyone is invited to this celebration of the success of our HLF project. We'd love to welcome anyone with an interest in Moseley history as well as members, volunteers and friends (old and new)!

**RSVP**  
moseleyhistory @  
moseleyexchange.com  
0121 449 0727

## Birmingham's Global Communities: a historical and contemporary perspective

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2013, 1.30 – 5.15pm**

**AV Room, Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery**

After reading our booklet about New Communities in Moseley you may want to know more about the history of our great multi-cultural city. This half day school by Birmingham Museums will include talks on Birmingham's Jewish Community in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, World War I and II and Birmingham's South Asian diaspora, ethnic diversity and social change in post-war Birmingham, as well as a discussion panel and light refreshments. Speakers will include Dr Malcolm Dick, Izzy Mohammed and Jahan Mahmood (who recently gave a fabulous talk for Moseley Society Local History Group about Britain's Muslim Soldiers).

Booking is essential. Tickets cost £25 and are available from The Gas Hall, by telephoning 0121 303 1966, or via [www.bmag.org.uk](http://www.bmag.org.uk)

## Heritage Open Days

**13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September**

A fantastic chance to explore historic sites in Birmingham with many special openings and events. Moseley Park and Icehouse will be open (Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September: 1400-1700), along with the Dovecote (same opening times). Other local events include tours of Spring Hill College (Moseley School), free entry to Selly Manor, with a Bournville Bee Day event to promote bee conservation (Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September: 1100 – 1600), Walking Tours (Friday 1300, Saturday 1300, Sunday 1200-1600) and bread-baking at Sarehole Mill (Sunday), and School Days at Clifton Board School with Victorian and World War II classrooms (Saturday and Sunday 1100-1600).

Details of all of these events and many more across the city and beyond can be found at <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk>, including a full list of the Birmingham events <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/directory/laa/Birmingham>.

## **Birmingham Central Library Re-opening September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013**

Don't forget that 'The Library of Birmingham' is now open. There's a huge programme of events and tours. Check [www.libraryofbirmingham.com](http://www.libraryofbirmingham.com) for details.

### **EVENING TALK**

Moseley Society – Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> October.  
'The Development of a Nailer's Cottage. 1840 - 2013.'  
Mark Clifford of Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings.  
7.30 pm at the Moseley Exchange.

### **DISPLAYS**

**'Moseley At War'**  
**The Dovecote**  
Until October

## **An Appeal for Volunteers**

The HLF funded project may be ending but our work goes on! We still need volunteers to help with the ongoing digitisation of 'The Collection'; these are the archives of the Moseley Society Local History Group. This is a wonderful resource for those interested in the history of the area, one which we'd like to make more easily accessible, through the website. Digitisation also protects this resource for the future by preserving a record of documents and pictures. There is something in the collection to interest everyone so come and get acquainted! If you would like to help us with scanning, creating Excel spreadsheets or in any other way please contact Christine Mann or come along on Monday and Tuesday in the Green Room at The Exchange.

**We are also planning two exciting new projects, and we'd welcome volunteers for either or both of them!**

### **'Moseley Now and Then'**

This project will consist of two parts and begin in October 2013. Firstly, a collection of photographs of 'Moseley Now' taken by Moseley people/ volunteers, including perhaps an image of a favourite spot in Moseley or memory of your time in Moseley, with captions/explanations attached. This will be a 'What Moseley Means to Me Modern Heritage Project'. Please contact us with your favourite Moseley spots or memories.

The second aspect will be postcards and photographs of Moseley in the past and quotes from and about Moseley people and writings about Moseley in the past. This will be a 'What Moseley Meant to People in the Past Heritage Project'.

### **'Moseley and WWI'**

This project will begin in January 2014 and also consists of two parts. Firstly we shall seek to provide a central 'data-base hub' on those from Moseley who served at the Front in whatever capacity along with information on particular individuals, working in collaboration with local churches, community groups and schools. Secondly, we plan to investigate the impact of WWI on Moseley - 'The Home Front', looking for example, at the role of Moseley women, conscientious objectors, land use (allotments requisitioned for food production) and support from Moseley people for local auxiliary hospitals.

